

for the prevention of future war, so far as that may be humanly possible. Since the terms of the Covenant were made public some months ago they have been subjected in each country to keen analysis and sometimes to fierce criticism. No one would pretend that the Covenant is a perfect instrument or that it affords an absolute guarantee against future wars. Its most sanguine advocates have made no such claim. Above all waves of criticism stands the solid rock of a Covenant founded upon the solemn and unanimous affirmation of thirty-two of the world's nations that not force but right and justice shall be the arbiter of international disputes, that war is not a reasonable, just or recognized method of determining controversies between States, and that each of the thirty-two signatory nations binds itself to the maintenance and enforcement of these eternal principles.

No nation shall resort to the arbitrament of arms until its quarrel has been submitted to the Council of Nations or to an international court of justice. Any nation failing to respect this just obligation is subject in the first place to be treated as an international outlaw and placed under a commercial and economic ban. Thereafter it is liable to such punishment through naval and military measures as may compel an observance of the obligation imposed upon it by the Covenant. The League of Nations further contemplates effective provisions for preventing trade with uncivilized races in noxious drugs, intoxicating liquor and munitions of war. It is to establish safeguards against the white slave traffic. It provides effective means for that direct and intimate consultation and discussion which are so necessary for a true understanding and settlement of international difficulties. The Canadian delegates took exception both in form and in substance to certain of its original provisions. Our views were set forth in a confidential memorandum which I circulated to the members of the Commission who drafted the Covenant and to the representatives of the five great Allied Powers. Many of our objections were met in the revised draft; and as to the others we felt that important as we regarded them, they ought not to be accounted of moment in comparison with the supreme purpose embodied in the Covenant.

Side by side with the Covenant stand the provisions of the Labour Convention. It was my privilege to attend the earlier meetings of the Commission which framed the articles on that subject now embodied

[Sir Robert Borden.]

in Part XIII of the treaty. At one of these meetings the preamble of the Labour Convention was framed. It is as follows:

Whereas the League of Nations has for its object the establishment of universal peace, and such a peace can be established only if it is based upon social justice;

And whereas conditions of labour exist involving such injustice, hardship and privation to large numbers of people as to produce unrest so great that the peace and harmony of the world are imperilled; and an improvement of those conditions is urgently required; as, for example, by the regulation of the hours of work, including the establishment of a maximum working day and week, the regulation of the labour supply, the prevention of unemployment, the provision of an adequate living wage, the protection of the worker against sickness, disease and injury arising out of his employment, the protection of children, young persons and women, provision for old age and injury, protection of the interests of workers when employed in countries other than their own, recognition of the principle of freedom of association, the organization of vocational and technical education and other measures;

Whereas also the failure of any nation to adopt humane conditions of labour is an obstacle in the way of other nations which desire to improve the conditions in their own countries;

The High Contracting Parties, moved by sentiments of justice and humanity, as well as by the desire to secure the permanent peace of the world, agree to the following.

Subsequently I was charged with the duty of bringing together representatives of the important industrial powers and of endeavouring to reconcile certain divergences of view in respect of the affirmation of general principles which have already been under discussion in this House. Those principles were adopted upon my motion at the Peace Conference in the following form:

The High Contracting Parties, recognizing that the well-being, physical, moral and intellectual, of industrial wage-earners is of supreme international importance, have framed, in order to further this great end, the permanent machinery provided for in Section I and associated with that of the League of Nations. They recognize that differences of climate, habits and customs, of economic opportunity and industrial tradition, make strict uniformity in the conditions of labour difficult of immediate attainment. But, holding as they do, that labour should not be regarded merely as an article of commerce, they think that there are methods and principles for regulating labour conditions which all industrial communities should endeavour to apply, so far as their special circumstances will permit.

Among these methods and principles, the following seem to the High Contracting Parties to be of special and urgent importance:

First: The guiding principle above enunciated that labour should not be regarded merely as a commodity or article of commerce.

Second: The right of association for all lawful purposes by the employed as well as by the employers.